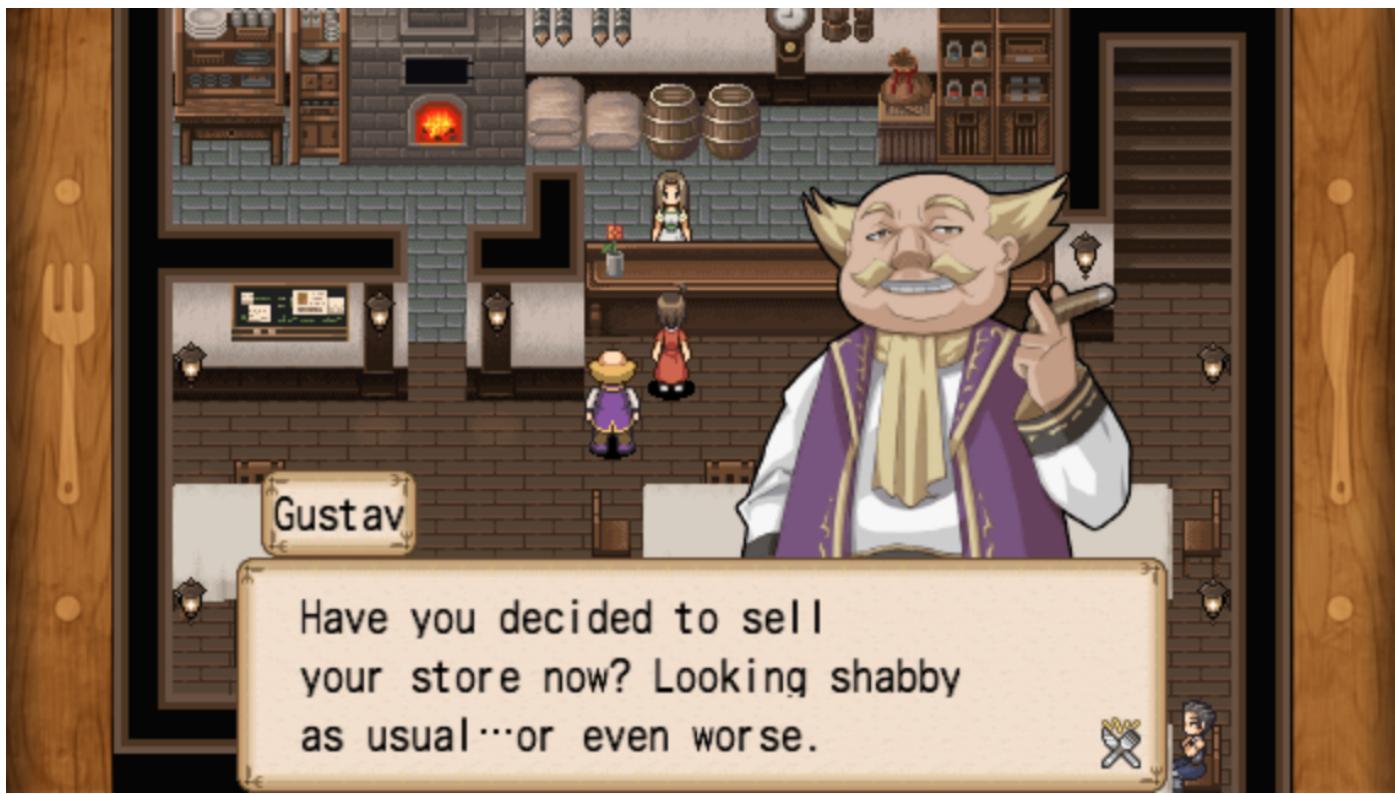


# RPG Reload File 024 – ‘Adventure Bar Story’

[February 5, 2015](#) by [Shaun Musgrave](#)



Hello, gentle readers, and welcome to the **RPG Reload**, the weekly feature where we serve only the finest wolf-ham sandwiches. Each week, we take a look at an RPG from the App Store’s past to see how it’s doing these days. It’s a chance to step out of the hustle and bustle of weekly releases and instead, think back to some of the great games we’ve left behind in our hungry search for the next bite of entertainment. I always strive to provide you with a balanced diet of RPGs, but to help me cover any blind spots, I’ve got the best sous-chef around: you. Once per month, the task of choosing the game falls to you, my appreciated readers. All you have to do is say the name of the game you’d like to see me feature in the comments below, in the [Official RPG Reload Club thread](#) in the forums, or in a tweet to [@RPGReload](#). I’ll randomly choose one winner each month, and plenty of fun will be had by all. The article you’re reading right now is the result of one such suggestion, in fact. That means the next reader’s choice **Reload** will be in the first week of March, so get those suggestions in now. February’s a short month, after all.



This week's selection is an interesting one because it's definitely something I wouldn't have gotten around to for a long while if you guys hadn't picked it. *Adventure Bar Story* ([\\$2.99](#)) is a game that is more interesting in its concept than its execution, and even its concept may not be all that novel to you if you've played some of the games that informed it. Imagine a Kemco RPG mashed up with certain aspects of a Kairosoft simulation, and you won't be far from *Adventure Bar Story*. You play as a young woman named Siela who is trying to save her restaurant, and home, from the grips of a rich jerk who wants the land for himself. To do that, you need to make your restaurant the most famous in the land by creating tasty dishes and winning cooking competitions. To make the finest foods, you need the best ingredients. You can buy some of them from shops, but most of them have to be picked by hand or taken off of monsters. To survive the increasingly dangerous locations where ingredients are found, you need to strengthen your characters. However, unlike most RPGs, you don't gain experience in *Adventure Bar Story* by fighting, but rather by eating. You have to find a steady balance between supplying food to your restaurant and eating it yourself to win.

*Adventure Bar Story* released in English on the App Store back in February of 2012, around a year after its debut in Japan. It's one of only two self-published Western releases from publisher Rideon Japan, a highly prolific supporter of mobile games in Japan for around 10 years now. Their best-known in the West is probably the *What Have I Done To Deserve This, My Lord?* series of games for Sony's PlayStation Portable. While *Adventure Bar Story* is their only English iPhone release, their Japanese output is far greater, with several games released every year. With that knowledge in mind, it might not surprise you to find out that *Adventure Bar Story* is actually the fifth of a long-running franchise of games titled *Series Of Wonderland* in Japan. Right from the start, the series was about mashing up sim elements with RPGs. The first game, *Adventure Director Of Wonderland*, was released in 2005 for Japanese feature phones. It cast you as the leader of a guild of heroes, giving you the responsibility of training and equipping them before sending them into battle.



The following year saw the release of the first restaurant simulation in the line, *Adventure Bar Of Wonderland*. Although it tells a different story, it's structurally identical to *Adventure Bar Story*. You have to improve your

restaurant's rank by winning cooking competitions, which requires you to gather better ingredients and recipes from increasingly dangerous locations. The graphics are a bit shabbier, but it's instantly recognizable to anyone familiar with *Adventure Bar Story*. The next game in the line, *Blacksmith Of Wonderland*, had you playing the job of an apprentice blacksmith, but apart from the career change, it was very similar to the previous game. After that, Rideon Japan went back to make as sequel to the first game in the series, capping off 2007 with the release of *Director Of Wonderland 2*.

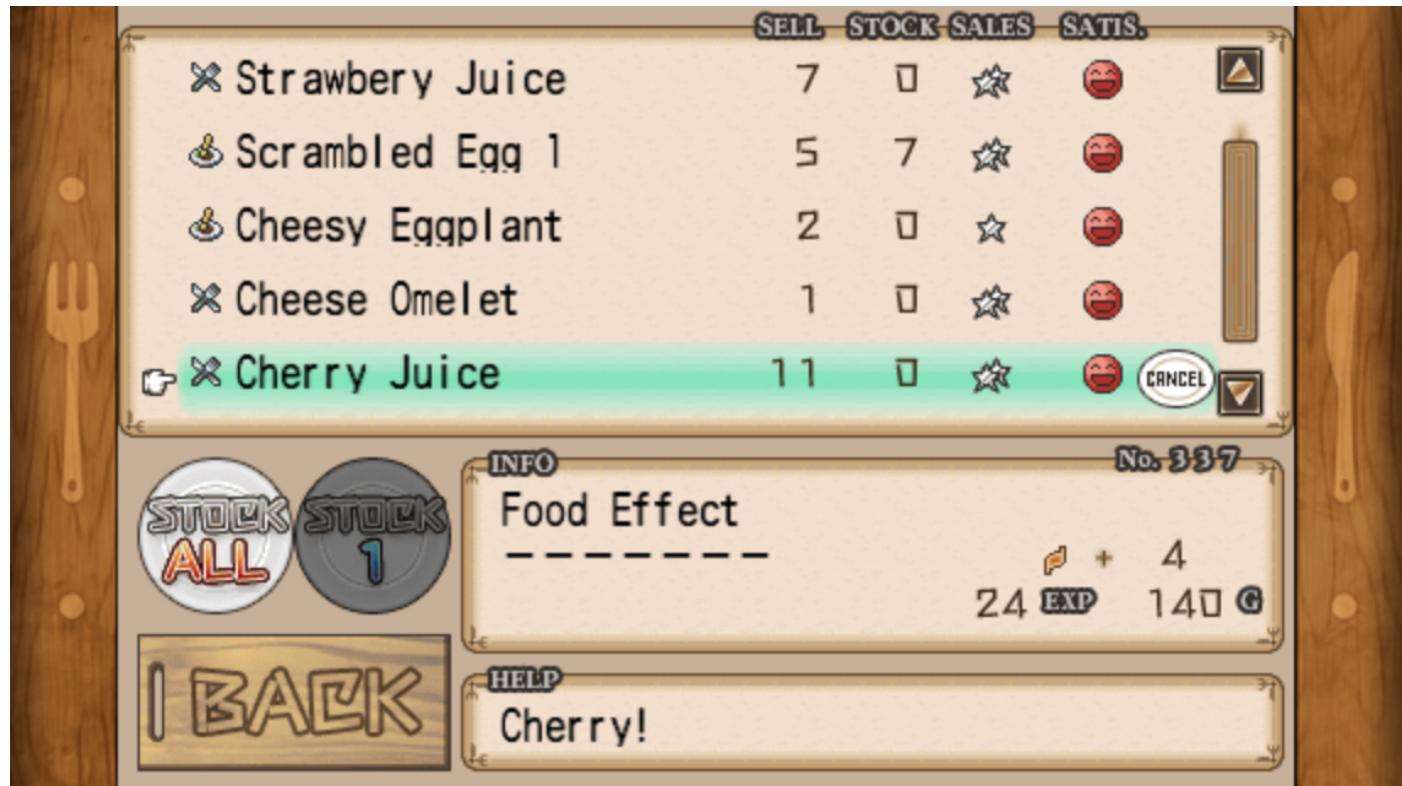
They spent the next couple of years porting the existing games around to the various carriers in Japan, returning to the series in 2009 with the feature phone version of *Adventure Bar Of Wonderland 2*, which is the game we know as *Adventure Bar Story*. It must have been a pretty good success for Rideon, because it's easily their most-ported title, eventually releasing not only on smartphones but also on PSP and Nintendo's 3DS. The game was followed by *Adventure Bar Labyrinth*, a free-to-play roguelike for PlayStation Mobile, and the recently-released *Blacksmith Of Wonderland 2* on iOS and Android. *Adventure Bar Labyrinth* even got an English release, which makes me think *Blacksmith 2* might have a chance in spite of the fact that none of Rideon's other iOS games have been translated.



Given its pre-established lineage in Japan, it's not that shocking that *Adventure Bar Story* did well there, but it is a little weird that English gamers took to it as well as they did. It's hardly a looker, with the kind of graphics you would expect from a port of a feature phone game. It also has a hilariously poor localization, both in terms of writing quality and technical issues. Lines of dialogue will sometimes coast right out of the text box and off the screen, the bottom of each line of text seems to get shaved off from time to time, and the dialogue reads awkwardly at the best of times. It's also an incredibly tedious game over the long haul, as once you've established the basic rhythm of the game, it's just a matter of running dungeons over and over again, grinding food and cash.

I'm going to chalk it up to being the right game in the right place at the right time. Mobile gamers seem more open than the average gamer to simulation games, as seen by Kairosoft's success and, I suppose, most of the top-grossing games in the App Store. The game's concept, born and bred on mobile phones, was naturally a good fit for the way many people seem to play on their devices. You weren't meant to sit down and play it from start to finish, but rather to take it in chunks here and there, a style of play that

greatly mitigates the repetitive nature of the game. Still, it can be a tough grind at times. The basic set-up is that the game is broken up into days. Each day you can venture out to one location only to gather ingredients. You then return to your restaurant, prepare your dishes and menu for the day, then open up the shop and see how things go. There are actually quite a few places to visit, but they open up slowly according to your bar rank. You can only rank up by winning cooking competitions, which are held every ten days.



In the early going, it's very rough. You have a lot of time to kill but only a few different places to do it. You'll end up hitting the same areas again and again, with each one offering some of the ingredients you want but missing several others. Trips can also be very risky at this stage, since your characters aren't very strong and medicine is relatively expensive. You'll often spend as much on healing items as you make from selling your food. Things are a bit easier once you whip together an apple pie, since the smell will pull in your first optional party member, who has a healing spell. Siela will also soon learn some magic that will help you, and if you're a wise chef, you'll likely stumble over the crispy bacon recipe pretty quickly. It's cheap to make and will boost

your levels very quickly. Combined with a stack of cabbage juice to take the edge off of your full stomach, you'll level up fast. Your bar rank won't move up as quickly, unfortunately, leaving you to revisit dungeons that pose no threat at all for a couple of hours of game time.

The battle system is boiler-plate JRPG turn-based stuff, and as long as you don't mind that it's the same old thing, it's not bad. You'll learn plenty of skills and there's an emphasis on finishing enemies off with certain moves to reap greater rewards from them. You'll also want to steal diligently to make sure you get all of the rare goodies, especially from bosses. The encounter rate is a bit high and the balance in any given area is pretty poor, so you'll be constantly jumped by groups of enemies that pose no threat at all or gangs of roving beasts that will beat the stuffing right out of your turkeys. Save often, I guess. The bosses also tend to be disproportionately difficult, but I think you aren't usually meant to beat them the first time through any given area. After you've made the most of your day, simply exit the dungeon area and head back to the castle to get back to the more enjoyable part of the game.



If nothing else, the cooking is fun. You can come by recipes in several ways. Shops will often directly sell them to you, but that's not a terribly good use of funds that could otherwise be allocated to buying the daily allotment of rare ingredients. You'll also be given hints once you have some of the ingredients towards certain dishes, but it's up to you to fill in the blanks. Some recipes are also found on shelves around the towns. By far the most interesting way to fill out your recipe book is to experiment and find them yourself, though. You can put any ingredients together with any tool to see what comes out. The list of possible dishes is massive, with over 400 in total, and they're often quite logical in their construction. Once you've hit on a particular dish, you can often churn out variants of it quite easily, too. As soon as you've figured out that apple plus blender equals apple juice, it's not hard to make the jump to just about every other kind of juice. Does it blend? In this game, the answer is usually 'yes'.

Putting together the menu is interesting, as well. Certain combinations go well together, and these also tend to make sense. Of course, you have to make hard decisions sometimes. Do you want to eat that awesome food you just made for the experience points, or do you want to sell it to make some cash? If it's particularly good, you might want to save it for the next cooking competition. Once you get the principles down, it's a thrill to find any new ingredient just for the sheer possibilities that will flow through your mind. Each new item brings a whole bunch of new dishes, which gives you even more potential combos for your restaurant's menu. This part of the game works so well that the buzz will carry you through the first several days before the next competition. If only the pacing were a bit tighter, the game would be a lot better. As it is, you'll typically hit a slump a few days before any given contest and have to drag yourself through. Given the game is a surprisingly lengthy 30 hours or so, depending on how thorough you are, that's a whole lot of slow stretches.



*Adventure Bar Story* has been fairly well maintained over the last few years. It's had regular bug fixes and got itself a lovely pair of borders when the iPhone 5 released. The last update was in April of 2014, but nothing broke in iOS 8, so it's hard to say when or if they'll update it again. Rideon was most likely pretty busy with the 3DS port for most of 2014, so now that it's been released, owners of newer iPhones might catch a break. I should also mention that the game has IAP that you can buy if you want to spoil the best part of the game. Basically, you can use jewels to unlock any given recipe instead of figuring it out yourself. I think you might also be able to buy items with them, but I'm not sure. I never felt the need to investigate. As for the graphics, audio, and translation, well, Kemco still gets away with stuff of this quality most months of the year, so it's actually not that bad if you're used to those standards.

If nothing else, *Adventure Bar Story* is still a fairly unusual RPG in the iOS landscape. It's also goofy and charming enough to massage you through its less enjoyable parts most of the time. For the price, it's hard to beat, but I'd at least like to see more efforts in a similar vein that build on its ideas and cut some of the fat. Perhaps *Blacksmith Of Wonderland 2* might scratch the

itch? Let's hope we haven't seen the last of Rideon Japan on App Stores outside of their home country, because they certainly have some fun and interesting ideas, even if they're not the most polished of games.



That's my opinion of *Adventure Bar Story*, but what do you think? Were you able to get over the grindier bits of the game for the sake of the cooking fun? Did the first sight of that all-too-familiar JRPG feature phone template send you running for the hills? I want to know your thoughts on the game, so please leave a comment below, post in the [Official RPG Reload Club thread](#), or send me a tweet at [@RPGReload](#). Oh, and I have to apologize about the **RPG Reload Podcast** being a little late. I forgot that the USA was enjoying its favorite turn-based strategy game event last weekend, so we couldn't get it recorded. It will be soon, though, I promise! As for me, I'll be back next week with another RPG from times long forgotten. Thanks for reading!

**Next Week's Reload Hint:** *Final Quest 1*